



STORMWATER MANAGEMENT COMMISSION

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PRESS RELEASE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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FLOODPLAIN MAPS AND MITIGATION PLANNING FOCUS OF 7th ANNUAL FLOOD AWARENESS WEEK

The Lake County Stormwater Management Commission is sponsoring its annual **Flood Awareness Week, April 7-11, 2003**. By County Board and SMC resolution, the seventh annual event will focus on floodplain mapping and your property in relation to the floodplain. SMC's doors will remain open late on Wed., April 9, 8:00 a.m. – 6:30 p.m. at SMC, 333-B Peterson Rd., Libertyville. The public is invited to learn about and view the county's floodplain maps created and maintained by the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA). Engineers will be on hand to help determine if a floodplain is on or adjacent to a property. FEMA's maps, also known as flood insurance rate maps (FIRMs), are the official maps to determine floodplains boundaries. All municipalities and the County have FIRMs to view.

"Floodplain maps are so important and most of the daily requests we receive are to find

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where a property is in relation to the floodplain. People should know their vulnerability to flooding,” said Ward Miller, SMC Executive Director.

In addition to floodplain map information, SMC will be updating its “Citizens Assistance” web pages. The pages provide information and links on flood insurance, flood zones, flood terms, floodproofing and how to view local FEMA floodplain maps on-line.

SMC is encouraging the public to see what SMC is doing to mitigate flooding, too. SMC’s website features information on flood hazard mitigation planning and projects that target high priority repetitive flooded areas throughout the county. SMC has begun the process of site-specific planning in Waukegan and North Chicago. Site-specific planning components of a site-specific plan include:

- Field survey
- Flood data
- Problem Inventory
- Mitigation measures
- Potential funding sources
- Action Plan

The planning effort begins with a field survey to collect basic data on buildings located in the floodplain. A survey crew will shoot the elevation of the first floor and other points that will help determine the building’s exposure to flooding, such as the elevation of window wells. Existing flood data will also be collected through a questionnaire distributed to homeowners.

An Advisory Committee including residents, business owners, and City representatives will be organized to help develop the plan. The site-specific mitigation plan will provide a problem inventory, a review of mitigation alternatives, identification of the more appropriate measures

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for individual buildings and the site as a whole, a review of potential funding sources for the recommended measures, and an action plan of specific mitigation projects. Once the plan is finalized, applications can be prepared for state and/or federal cost-share funds to assist willing property owners in protecting their flood-prone buildings. SMC's first site-specific plan was completed in 2001 with the Village of Gurnee. Gurnee's planning process will be the model from which the next two plans will be developed. To view Gurnee's plan see:

http://www.gurnee.il.us/Flood_Committee/flood_mitigation_plan_12-01.pdf.

"We know that flooding can happen any time of the year but dedicating a week in the spring calls attention to Lake County's potential for flooding and the challenge of homeowners and municipalities to reduce damages. Our job is to make residents aware of how vulnerable the county is to flooding, and to take steps to help themselves to reduce the potential for flood damage," said Ward Miller, SMC executive director.

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LAKE COUNTY FLOOD FACTS:

- Since 1982, Lake County has been declared a Presidential declared disaster area 3 times and State disaster area 6 times.
- Flooding is a year-round occurrence. The floods of 1986 were in September; the floods of 1996 were in July.
- Average yearly flood damages in Lake County portion of the Des Plaines River alone amount to over \$9 million.

TIPS FOR HOMEOWNERS:

- Your homeowners insurance does not cover flooding. Check with your agent on federal flood insurance.
- Check FEMA's flood insurance rate maps to see where you are in relation to the floodplain. Your village or city hall should have the maps for viewing.
- Clear the storm sewer grates on the street in front of your home. Often, clogged grates are responsible for street and yard flooding.
- Direct your gutter downspouts away from foundations and into grassy areas. Vegetated ground can soak up more runoff.
- Something as simple as elevating utilities in your basement or garage can reduce flood damage replacement costs.